

Tidbit 9

8 Ever, 9 Never, when contemplating a finesse

Interpretation: This relates to the number of cards held in both hands when deciding whether to finesse for the Q while holding the A, K and J. With a combined nine card holding, play for the drop rather than taking the finesse while, with an eight-card holding, take the finesse.

When the defenders hold 4 cards the chance of them breaking 3-1 is actually higher than them breaking 2-2 but that also includes the occasions when the Q is singleton so the odds on a 3-1 break without a singleton Q and a 2-2 break are about the same. The majority of declarers play for the drop and to avoid being singled out for a top or bottom score, it is preferable to do likewise.

Example:

♠A2
♥J1083
♦AK1083
♣65

North
West
22
East
South

♠J75
♥AK975
♦97
♣AJ3

Bidding: East Dealer, E/W vul

East	South	West	North
1H	1S	2S *	Pass
4H	Pass	4NT	Pass
"2 x Aces"	Pass	6H	

West's 2S bid, is an unassuming cue bid, showing good values with heart support and asking East to describe her hand further. After East jumps to game, West checks for Aces and bids a stretchy small slam. The KS was led, declarer won in dummy and played for the drop in hearts which succeeded before setting up the diamond suit and discarding 2 x spades. The case for playing for the drop might be slightly strengthened by South having made a bid but a successful finesse against Qxx in the North hand will still not help secure 12 tricks on best defence with the AS entry gone from dummy.

Dir: East
Vul: E/W

♠1043
♥62
♦J62
♣K10987

North
West
22
East
South

♠J75
♥AK975
♦97
♣AJ3

4
12 13
11

♠KQ986
♥Q4
♦Q54
♣Q42

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	-	-	-	-	
S	-	-	-	-	
E	1	5	6	1	5
W	1	5	6	1	3

Exercise:

*Think of exceptions where it would **not** make sense to play for the drop when holding nine cards in a suit between the two hands including the AKJ*

Answer to Exercise Tidbit 8:

♠AKJT7
♥J983
♦
♣QT62

You are East with no-one vulnerable. South opens 1D and your partner pre-empt 2S. North bids 3C (forcing). What do you bid?

BD: 27	♠2	Dir: S
	♥AT5	Vul: None
	♦9765	
	♣A9843	
♠Q98643		♠AKJT7
♥62		♥J983
♦82		♦
♣K75		♣QT62
	♠5	
	♥KQ74	
	♦AKQJT43	
	♣J	
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ NT	
N	1 6 5 - 1	8
S	1 6 4 - 1	5 11
E	- - - 3 -	16
W	- - - 3 -	

Bad hands go rapidly and your partner is weak. You should bid 4S. Your huge spade support indicates that you will make one trick at most in spades in defence and your diamond void is worth a lot. Despite your hearts and clubs being rather modest, it is unlikely that you will be doubled. It is very likely that North-South will go on to 5D but it will be very difficult for them to bid the makeable slam given your interference.